

REMARKS

The Office Action required submission of corrected drawings. In response, the Applicant concurrently submits formal drawings and requests that the Office place the formal drawings in the application file.

Before this amendment, claims 1 and 3-44 were pending in the application (claim 2 canceled previously). The Office rejected claims 1, 18, and 29. More specifically, the Office Action rejected claims 1, 18, and 29 as anticipated under 35 U.S.C. § 102 by U.S. Patent No. 6,389,078 to Hessel et al. In addition, the Office objected to claims 3-17, 19-28, and 30-34 as depending on a rejected base claim. The Office Action indicated that those claims would be allowable if rewritten to include the limitations of the base claims and any intervening claims.

Although the Applicant respectfully disagrees with the rejections of, and objections to, of the claims, the Applicant amends the claims without prejudice and seeks to pursue the objected-to claims in this application. More specifically, the Applicant cancels without prejudice claims 3, 19, and 30. The Applicant amends claims 1 (to add the limitations of canceled claim 3), 4, 18 (to add the limitations of canceled claim 19), 20, 29 (to add the limitations of canceled claim 30), and 31.

The Applicant reserves the right, and presently intends, to pursue the rejected and/or other claims in follow-on or other applications and to present arguments with respect to those claims in such applications. Furthermore, the Applicant notes that it does not amend the claims because of the rejections over the cited references; rather, the Applicant merely cancels those claims to facilitate compact prosecution and to expedite the issuance of a patent.

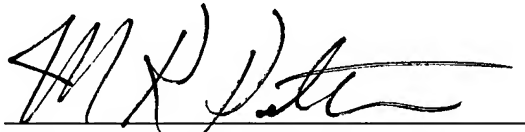
In view of the above remarks, the Applicant respectfully submits that the presently pending claims are allowable. The Applicant therefore respectfully requests a prompt Notice of Allowance.

CONCLUSION

In view of the remarks above, the Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are in allowable condition. Consequently, favorable reconsideration and prompt issuance of a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested. No fee (with the exception of the petition for extension of time) is believed to be due. Should any fees under 37 CFR 1.16-1.21 be required for any reason relating to the enclosed materials, however, the Commissioner is authorized to deduct such fees from Deposit Account No. 10-1205/SILA:098.

The examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the phone number indicated below with any questions or comments, or to otherwise facilitate expeditious and compact prosecution of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M R Peterson', written over a horizontal line.

MAXIMILIAN R. PETERSON
Registration No. 46,469
Attorney for Applicant

O'KEEFE, EGAN & PETERMAN
1101 Capital of Texas Highway South
Building C, Suite 200
Austin, Texas 78746
(512) 347-1611
FAX: (512) 347-1615